

Expanded open-space land
(HB 1694 by Stiles/Jones)

DIGEST: HB 1694 would have provided that the five-year agricultural-use requirement, which qualifies land for favorable "qualified open-space land" tax treatment, would not apply to certain land. Land that had been devoted primarily to agricultural use during the year preceding the tax year could qualify as open-space land if it was contiguous to qualified open-space land and was owned by the same owner as the contiguous open-space land.

GOVERNOR'S
REASON
FOR VETO:

The governor said that when the major Property Tax Code revisions were passed by the Legislature in 1979, the qualified open-space land definition was carefully and deliberately restricted. HB 1694 would circumvent those restrictions and reduce taxes on land that would not otherwise have qualified for reduced taxes. The governor said the tax reduction would mean that other land would have to pick up the lost taxes. "I feel the current restrictions are fair and do not need to be eroded."

AUTHOR'S
VIEW:

HB 1694 is a pro-farmer, pro-business bill designed to encourage and expand agricultural production, said Rep. Mark Stiles. The bill would allow farmers to acquire land next to their already qualified open-space land and have it also qualify for favorable tax treatment without waiting five years. Without this special treatment many farmers could not afford to expand their production. The governor's veto was apparently not well thought out, Rep. Stiles said.

NOTES: HB 1694 passed the House on the Consent Calendar and was not analyzed in a Daily Floor Report.